

## NESS Meeting Minutes January 14, 2026

**Attendance:** Helena Dahlen, President; Barbara Ann Smith, VP; Crocetta Argento; Tammy Brown; Cathy Fu; Monica Green; Gina Hoagland; Melessia Jasper; Michele Mullins; Kyle Pokorny; Teresa Reese; John Roemer; Sabrina Sapp; Lisa Thomas; Amanda Turner; Terisa White.

### Reports from previous Committee meetings

- University Steering Committee, Barbara and Helena
  - Full-day retreat planned for 3/27/26. The goal is to increase communication between student and staff groups. NESS senators are strongly encouraged to attend. Prior to the retreat, a survey will be sent to gauge knowledge and attitudes about shared governance.
- Update from HR about Position Descriptions (PDs): HR is evaluating PDs for all non-exempt staff this academic year. On January 8, notice was sent to supervisors that this process is underway.
- NESS leadership will meet with CHRO Lynne Adams later today. This is the regular quarterly meeting, but Helena recently learned that Dr. Sheares Ashby and Kacey Hammel will also attend.
- CUSS, Cathy attended yesterday
  - Maryland's legislative session is underway, and there is a huge budget shortfall. The message from USM is that there is nothing left to cut, and that any further cuts may mean staff reductions.
  - Paid family medical leave (PFML) is coming on July 1!
    - This is a state program. (FMLA is a federal program, so stay tuned to see how they will interact.)
    - State employees will receive 12 weeks of paid leave that will not impact leave balances (!)
    - There is no waiting period for new employees.
    - There's an expanded definition of "family member".
- Strategic Planning Committee– Crocetta
  - Organizational Innovation Vitality subgroup is meeting in late January to put together a stakeholder engagement plan, happening in March. Would NESSies prefer to participate via survey or focus group? A survey would be easier, but focus groups often yield more dialogue and ideas.(I didn't understand that the conclusion was here.)
- Athletic Policy Committee– Terisa. The committee has only met once. Lori Hardesty is the new head, and they're reviewing their charge now.

### Ad-Hoc Information

- Town Hall staff meeting with the President TBD. ESS and NESS are communicating with her office about this.
- Upcoming Elections [Senators and Committee Assignments](#)

- March: Election of senators. Senators with expiring terms are encouraged to re-up. Qualifications to be a senator are a willingness to attend NESS meetings and to serve on one or more university committees.
- May: Election of President and Treasurer. (Barbara still has another year on her term as VP.)

**Open Committee Positions within NESS.** [Senators and Committee Assignments](#)

- Alternative CUSS rep. (Cathy Fu is primary)
- Climate action Steering committee
- Inclusion Council Committee
- Faculty and Staff Care and Belonging Committee

**Email about USM Administrative Professionals Learning Day:** Some in our group received this email asking for input about this event, coming in April. Helena will forward the email for those who didn't get it.

**The next meeting** is scheduled for February 11, from 11:30 to 12:45 pm. This meeting has been extended to accommodate our two guests:

- Carlos Jensen, Vice Provost and Dean, Undergraduate Academic Affairs
- Jack Suess, VP/CIO, and Erica D'Eramo, who will talk about the Digital Accessibility timeline

--- Cathy Fu, NESS Secretary